background information

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Notes on the Contents of this Issue

The article on Marx and Social Change by Prof. Wendland of Germany is translated and reprinted from the volume Verantwortung für den Menschen, a volume of essays published by Kreuz-Verlag (Stuttgart, 1957). We are grateful to the publishers for giving us permission to publish this essay by Dr. Wendland who is Professor of New Testament Theology in the University of Munster and a member of the Working Committee of the Department on Church and Society.

The article, Church and State: The Viewpoint of a Christian in China is by Dr. Kiang Wen-han and is translated from the Nanking Seminary Review by Dr. F.P. Jones of the U.S.A. This translation has been checked by Mr. Lutley of the United Kingdom.

The Challenge to the Church in Europe surveys the new situation confronting the churches in Europe and the response which they are making to it.

The article on The Development of a Christian Economics Group and the Establishment of a Parish Credit Union is the first of a series of reports on imaginative action projects to be published in Background Information. This particular statement has come recently from the Administrative Board of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, a new effort of Christian witness and service which began in 1948 in the Puerto Rican and Negro quarter of New York City. We welcome descriptions of other imaginative action projects which our readers may be able to provide us.

The Editors

I

MARX AND SOCIAL CHANGE

by

Heinz Dietrich Wendland

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

(Karl Marx, Eleventh of the Theses on Feuerbach.)

This famous and much-quoted statement depends on a series of presuppositions which must be taken into account when discussing Marx's challenge to the society of his time. In view of the great changes which this statement has effected in society and government during the past century, in fact, Christian theology must face the question of whether these theses are right or wrong, if theology is to answer its own questions and those of others about the relationship of the church and the world. Since Marx's demand still influences millions and millions of our contemporaries, one cannot speak to the real situation of our world without keeping it in mind.

Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach clearly shows the direction and purpose of his study and thought. However theoretical it may appear, his analysis of bourgeois-capitalist society must be understood in the light of this statement, i.e. that it is essential to change society and the state, beginning with the conditions of production. The purpose of Marx's analyses was to pave the way for the transformation of the world, to make clear the imperious necessity for changing it, to clear the way for appropriate action.

The Political Application

In the first place, this significant phrase stresses the unity of theory and practice; from the beginning, much of the strength of Marxism has lain in the political application of this thesis. Every theory about society must contribute toward changing it; to this extent it is a "practical-critical", "revolutionary" theory, to quote from the first Thesis on Feuerbach. In this first thesis Marx had dissociated himself from all "previous materialism" (including the ideas of Feuerbach himself) which regarded reality merely as an object, instead of a field for "human activity".

Marx is concerned with the new "materialism" of "revolutionary practice", Thus, in the second place, his doctrine of history -- which includes the conception of historic necessity and which asserts that the old bourgeois régime will soon give birth to a new form of society -- is here combined with a demand for revolutionary action. That is, he maintains that philosophy and historical analysis must be translated into policy. At the same time, historical-dialectical materialism is an "ethic", an imperative, a demand for revolution by the proletariat in the name of humanity and justice. Radical political liberation is to bring about the total liberation of man.

The danger thus arises that human existence and all social processes and institutions may become completely politically-centered -- despite the utopian expectation that the state will gradually "wither away".

The creation of an agent who will act to change the world may be consider Marx's real aim and passion. His answer to the quest for just such a human being is given at length in the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848, when he speaks about the proletariat, and about the communists whose historical role is to arouse the proletariat and spur them to revolutionary action. The proletariat is the only class called on to effect the decisive changing of the world, the absolute revolution, so to speak, which will make the whole of human social history to date just prehistory.

Marx's Idea of Change

But let us ask, first of all, what Marx meant by "changing" the world. Taken by itself, this phrase could be used in an idealistic context. It would ther mean changing the material world through the creative power of the spirit, in response to an ethical imperative. Undoubtedly for Marx, too, the expression originally had ethical and humanistic connotations. But in his thought, the idea of changing the world must never be isolated from the real history of society and from the worker, who is the moulder of history. According to Marx, to change society means to restore man to his real self, i.e. to release him from his "alienation", from servitude to material things and from the slavery of his present working conditions. The "humanistic" demand is therefore a practical, historical demand, i a demand to change society and the state.

It is not a general fundamental religious-ethical principle, then, but rather a social transformation, a revolutionary campaign, that he has in mind. It is not simply an appeal to the individual to take action nor simply a call to overthrow those who have hitherto held political power. For Marx's challenge to "chang the world" is both universal and practical. On the one hand, it aims at a complete new social order in which man will again be in harmony with himself and nature. On the other, it is concerned with those who are to effect this revolution in society and with the formation of their political will. This will ultimately result in the "dictorship of the proletariat" and the abolition of class-rule by the capitalist exploiters.

A New Form of Exploitation

What a tragedy it is that this humanistic, socio-ethical demand to change the world, to lift, as it were, the previous social order from its hinges, has led to a new and terrible form of exploitation and to the complete estrangement of man in the collectivist system. Through its ideological domination, this system makes man "totally" dependent upon it, going far beyond all previous forms of slavery, serfdom and political dependence. The "absolute" revolution has therefore failed, insofar as its aim was to remove the "class antagonisms" of the "old bourgeois society", and thereby establish a society "in which the free development of each is a condition for the free development of all".

For the "absolute" revolution has not brought freedom, it has not produced the abolition of social dependence, it has not annulled the "alienation" of man from himself in society and the world of work. The Christian view of man and

society traces its failure to do these things to the illusion that man could wipe out the whole of previous human history and create a perfect society in which freedom and equality would be completely reconciled and all forms of domination and rule abolished.

In this assumption that history can be wiped out through absolute revolution, Marxist Communism is completely "utopian" or, in theological terms, immanent eschatological. Science has never been able to get away from the idea of a social utopia; it has rather given support to the recurrent visions of such utopias in the modern world by assuming that human reason has unlimited power and that man is naturally "good". The abolition of all existing historical social institutions, traditions and ways of thought by a revolutionary class, or by a political order of "professional revolutionaries", cannot divorce man and society from history. The "pre-history" of society remains a reality and continues on.

The Revolution Has Become Historical

It is true, however, that the revolution (which has become "historical" and is therefore no longer "absolute") has produced tremendous changes in the historical life of men and continues to do so, while itself undergoing change in its interaction with historical factors and social institutions. But the absolute revolution itself becomes temporal, historical; it "makes" history, but it cannot wipe out the history which preceded it. The men who brought about the revolution become in their turn agents of new forms of domination, whose power is completely comprehensive. The expectation that the state would "wither away" produces as its corollary a tremendous political extension of the power of the state.

The historical forces of the past revolt against the absolute revolution, changing and modifying it in their turn; hence the passionate struggles about the different "national roads to socialism". The revolution continues and the dialectic of history continues, but it is now directed against the rigid historic form of Communism, which in its turn has become an alien domination. The "revolution of the proletariat" in 1917, with its consequences in China and Eastern and South-eastern Europe is not the final ultimate revolution; it has become historical and has had to face itself the dialectic of history. Man clearly cannot endure the attempt to left him out of his historical setting.

The Christian Attitude

But realizing this must not lead the Christian to relapse into an anti-revolutionary, conservative attitude. Ever since the time of the French Revolution, this has been a special pitfall for Christian theology and for Protestant social thinking. Karl Marx has rightly recognized the dynamic-revolutionary character of the history of modern society. We live in a world of constant change. But if the purpose of this change is not absolute revolution, and if the proletariat can no longer be expected to effect the "break-up of the previous order", (i.e. if the proletariat does not represent the chosen and select agent of the ultimate transformation of society), then fresh answers must be found to two questions. First, what is the goal of this change? Secondly, by whom is it to be brought about?

This poses, on the one hand, the question of the historical agents in a dynamic, "post-proletarian" society. We cannot go into this here, as it would necessitate diagnosing the whole condition of present-day society. On the other

hand, it presents a question and a challenge to the Church, especially to the "secul Christians who live and work in society.

In simple terms the question is this: Is the proletariat, or some other social force which may have taken its place in the meantime, the only agent of social change? Should we as Christians living and working in society merely put up with society and its institutions, or should we take action to change them? Can and should the Christian Church feel and act, on its part, as a co-agent responsible for effecting social changes?

We answer this question affirmatively for the following reasons. In the first place, we do so on the basis of our rejection of the utopian conception of an absolute revolution. In the second place, we do so on the basis of the theological and sociological insight that, because of the inter-relatedness of the Church and a society that is mobile, variegated and dynamic, there is no single decisive agent of social change. Rather, in such a society the stimuli that change it come from several quarters and must be effected by several agents. For Marx the concept of absolute revolution, as we have called it, is inextricably bound up with his concept of class and of the proletariat, whom he regards as the sole possible agent of revolution. This latter concept, therefore, must also be revised if we recognize the ideology of absolute revolution to be utopian and destructive.

If we as Christians reject the religion of revolution, this does not by any means imply that we have an anti-revolutionary attitude which refuses to make essential changes. That is to say, it does not mean that we are unwilling to modify traditional institutions or conventions of society in order to improve the lot of people today; or that we refuse to get rid of unsuitable institutions. A pure and radical conservative attitude cannot be realized in history, any more than an absolute revolution or a perfect society. (A radical conservative attitude would render impossible the concept of history, understood as a process, as a dynamic, as change; and mankind, under such a view, would have been bound to its "origins" from which nothing further could have originated!) Even those Christians who are anti-revolutionary have constantly had to accept the adaptation of social institutions to the changes of history. For example, they had to "act upon the basis of fact" when the social order was actually overturned by the French Revolution, and again by the events of 1917 to 1918.

But when we speak of changing the social order through Christ, we are not referring to such a more or less compulsory accommodation to de facto social-political changes, which, particularly in Lutheran churches, has been bound up with a peculiar socio-political positivism (retaining at the same time a fundamental anti-revolutionary conservatism.) We are asking, rather, whether the church, in its service to the world and in its form as "secular" Christendom, may not help to change society deliberately, consciously and actively -- and perhaps even must do so, in order to "overtake" revolutions that are imminent. That is to say, should it not try to act to make revolution superfluous by eliminating the seeds of social discontent and subjecting the inadequacies of existing forms to thoroughgoing criticism?

Two Points of Reference for Christian Social Action

The deliberate action of Christians in the world is determined by two

points of reference: first, by those fundamental institutions which, according to the Word of God, have been given to maintain human society and to keep it within its historical bounds, i.e., the political exousia, marriage and the mandate to have dominion over the products of the earth. These mandates cannot be abolished; they are beyond the claims of any social change. In fact, the changes in society, which are going on all the time, take place within the limits imposed by these, divine mandates. However, the mandates should not be described as transcendent or static. They are themselves part of history; they do not stand "outside" society; They are continuous manifestations of the "Deus pro nobis", of the "lex charitatis latens" of God's will in the world and for the world.

It is for this reason, and not because of inner decrepitude or weakness, that the State and marriage, for example, are constantly changing, both as legal institutions and in their social structure. Examples are the change from the oriental despotism of antiquity to modern mass democracy, from the clan to the small family of today.

Now sinful man, as much when he is blind and unenlightened about these institutions as when he is guided by reason, is the agent appointed by God Himself to carry out and maintain these institutions and mandates. Consequently, the historical changes which take place in society must (to some degree) be regarded as degrading and perverting these institutions, because of man's disbelief and distrust in the mandates of God. The world of human society carries within it the seeds of its own decay -- it falls victim to its claim to autonomy or absoluteness, to the alleged self-sufficiency of its power and methods. Therefore we say: the institutions established by God maintain and preserve society, i.e., they are continually changing it! Such change restrains sin in its social dimensions (it cannot abrogate it) and represents the never-ending struggle with the tendency of social structures to degeneration and perversion. It is in this context that one must consider the significance of what Marx recognized as "class domination" or "the alien direction of human labour". One must free it, however, from the ideology of the absolute revolution.

The Concept of Daemonisation

At the same time, we must introduce the concept of "daemonisation", i.e., of perverted social structures, a deterioration in the framework and relations of society that becomes objectivized and structural. The historically-given structures, like that of the State or of marriage or of working conditions have certainly not been spared this fate of daemonisation. The fundamental "orders" instituted by God function critically in relation to every kind of perversion, (for example, the deterioration of justice into injustice, of power into terror, of subordination into ideological slavery, etc.) and that means they act as an incentive to change society. One does not "preserve" the State or marriage, if one regards the historic, political and legal order as equivalent to God's mandate, and therefore sancrosanct. We cannot preserve without effecting change. Although we cannot bring about absolute changes, of course, we cannot redeem ourselves from the forces of history in such a way as to create a perfect world. That would mean that the fundamental orders instituted by God for society would have become superfluous, because the eschatological transformation of man would have begun. The true "preservation" of the historical orders of society shows up the illusion of utopian visions of the past, just as it shows up the terrible illusion of absolute revolution.

Man Himself is the Second Point of Reference

The second point of reference for Christians acting to change society is man himself. Man did not create himself; he is not the absolute master of his world nor is he, (as Marx maintained) the ultimate reality. He is God's creature, His servant and His instrument in ruling the world.

Man is called to the glory of God's Kingdom. It was for man, man in his state of unbelief, or before he heard Christ's message and also man in post-Christia society, that Christ died and rose again. It is for man that the institutions of society exist, not in order to translate him into a Paradise of social bliss, nor in order to make him a functionary controlled by collective ideology; they exist in order to preserve him in his personality, freedom and social responsibility, and in order to govern human intercourse in the technical and in the social-ethical sense.

For man's sake, the categorical imperative of social ethics is: continual reform of social institutions! Here Marx's "categorical imperative", as stated in his "Criticism of Hegel's Philosophy", can be adopted and re-interpreted as meaning "... to alter radically every situation where man is humiliated, enslaved, foresaken or despised..." Those who have seen through the illusion of absolute revolution -- and they are primarily the Christians -- are responsible for realizing this imperative in the struggle for human rights. They are to do this by a transformation of the social order in two ways: by obediently carrying out God's mandates with reference to the "lex caritatis latens", and through charity toward man (as created by God and for God.) In this sense Christians must realize and put in effect the truth in Marx's rigidly immanent humanism, freed from its ideological distortion. Accordingly, they must recognize their responsibility for a relative change of society. This is the true presupposition for maintaining man in that "station" whic God has appointed for him, as long as the fulness and consummation of God's Kingdom has not yet appeared.

Christian Love

But there is another factor which we have mentioned whose place must be justified in this context, namely, love. The Christian Church has been given the power and ability to love the neighbor, to see in one's fellow-man one's neighbor, t whom we are bound by God's commandment. This leads the Church to change society through service (diakonia). Order, freedom, justice and social responsibility are basic principles of social ehtics known to others besides Christians. They are recognized within "secular" society under the hidden rule of God's law, which both preserves and critically refashions society. But a secular Christendom recognizes these divine laws to be the action of God's love in the form of the "lex caritatis latens" and its response is love of the neighbor, because it is subject to God's commandment to love and because it stands in the presence of the redeeming love of Christ.

Love makes the world better. It heals wounds, it trains the neglected, it gives work and bread to refugees, it works for juster legislation. The usual theological criticism of the illusion that the world can be transformed through revolution must not lead us to think that justice and injustice, good and evil, war and peace, order and anarchy are only of relative importance, that the state social conditions are in makes no difference. For love (in the New Testament sense)

is never indifferent; it "rejoiceth not in iniquity" (1 Corinthians 13:6); it rather embodies in itself all the demands and norms of secular social ethics and thus "fulfils" all the commandments (Phil. 4:8; Romans 13: 8-10.) Love takes the justice and relative goodness in the world and strengthens it against its enemies, against the violence of rulers, against criminals, against the absolutism of economic interests, against practical nihilism.

The widespread Christian assertion that the world cannot be improved because all men are sinners is obviously a theological short-circuit; for it makes no distinction between the relative historical improvement of social institutions and the eschatological transformation of the world. And, secondly, it takes no account of the fact that Christ made people in this world doers of mercy and peacemakers, thus authorizing them to fight all "social" evils. Thirdly, it ignores the fact that love of one's neighbor preserves and strengthens the good which God has given to man as a social being through his mandates, endowing him with the capacity for social intercourse, and that love of one's neighbor embodies as well as purifies reason's partial recognition of this good.

Christian Love is Relative

Christian love is also relative, since it is directed to a neighbor in a particular time and place, i.e., it is historical, It presupposes history and "makes" history. Its acts, being historical, are bound to pass away with the other forms of history. Nevertheless -- and this is a facet and a mark of the paradox of love -- it reveals man to be a creature who cannot be completely absorbed into any social institution, nor even in any full or final sense into the divine orders. For man is called to be reborn, to be restored to the image of God in Christ, to share in the glory of the Kingdom of God. Hence the "humanism" of love cannot regard man merely as a "social being", because the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of Love will not take place within human society.

Just because the love which proceeds from the spirit of Christ sees man as a being called to eschatological existence, it applies itself to effecting relative changes in this world. Otherwise it would be betraying man. On the other hand, if we were to believe that the world could be transformed absolutely through love, we should be putting a Christian utopia in the place of Christian realism, which operates in historical terms and subject to historical conditions. But Christians must never stop trying to change society on the grounds that such action smacks of chiliasm or enthusiasm. If they do, they will promote injustice and fail to perceive the decadence of historical institutions, they will be equating the given social order with the institutions appointed by God, they will be depricing the divine orders of their critical force and turning them into a conservative "mythos". The absolute revolution cannot be overcome by a Christian policy of anti-revolutionism, but only by a progressive reformation of society, a reformation dictated by love at once relative to, directed toward and conditioned by history.

One cannot work for the continuing reformation of the Church in the name of obedience to faith, and at the same time refuse obedience to faith, and at the same time reform the institutions of society for the sake of its fellowmen. It is only in this dual sense (which includes the gradual, constant changing of society by the Church) that the slogan "reformation, not revolution" can be justified. Otherwise,

the slogan merely conceals the fact that the Church is always responsible for preserving man as a social being. Therefore it cannot leave the social orders to their own devices, especially since these orders are bound up with the divine orders which the Church continually proclaims.

The form and the effect of institutions upon the social life of the members of society must therefore be constantly examined and measured by the norms of freedom, social justice and mutual concern; and it is Christian love which is the ultimate norm and the "fulfilment" of all these norms.

The question of "changing society" is therefore much broader than the narrower question of armed rebellion with which many theologians are preoccupied today. With this restricted approach they can never settle or even begin to grasp the problem. It seems to be distracting their attention from the real concrete tasks in contemporary society.

We have not been given the "solution to the riddle of history", as Marx asserted. For then we would truly be in the position of Christ. All action for social change remains in this world, within history. Christian love works in the service of man in history. But it never shuns the toil required for the relative and ceaseless changing of society, because (despite all its sinful decrepitude) the world is still God's world and because it awaits the real absolute revolution when God will create the new world in which justice dwells -- the justice which is one with divine love.

II

CHURCH AND STATE: THE VIEWPOINT OF A CHRISTIAN IN CHINA

By Kiang Wen-han

The relation of church and state is a subject that has been discussed in the Western Church during the past twenty years, and it is also a subject of timely interest to the Chinese Church, because it involves the twofold problem of loving country and church. We in the New China feel that these two devotions are consistent with each other, but from the standpoint of faith it is important to point out the foundation and significance of this consistency. Western Christians think that although we in China have freedom of religious belief, still we have compromised with the government, and thus the freedom which we have received is not complete. Is this attitude correct? Let us see.

The Point of View of Western Christians

First, let us see what is the background of Western thinking when Western Christians take up the subject of church and state. This subject has been much discussed ever since the first World War. There are two reasons for this interest: First, they realize that capitalism has reached the end of its road, and their historic and traditional society and civilization is in process of utter disintegration. Secondly, they feel that the significance of the state is becoming increasingly obvious in human life, and the area controlled by the government is growing ever greater, with its authority being steadily enlarged. Especially because of the progress of science, it is possible for a reactionary government to exercise more and more effective control through its manipulation of the means of rapid communication and its control of powerful armaments. And so not only has Western society gradually thrown off Christian influence, but there has also been a steady encroachment upon the spiritual liberty of the church.

The history of Western nations is inseparable from Christian influence. Christians are a large proportion of the population. Even though many of them do not go to church any more, still at least 80 or 90% of the population is nominally Christian. Even though the policies of their governments are in many respects inconsistent with Christian principles, still they like to call themselves Christian states. Certainly the church has had an important place in Western history, and has much influenced both society and civilization.

In this historical development church and state have been very closely related to each other. We know that under the Roman Empire the early church was a persecuted body, a condition which continued until the time of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. From that time on the church was used by the state, and their relations were very close. In the Middle Ages the pope became more powerful than the emperor. In 1077 Pope Hildebrand excommunicated Henry IV, and the latter had to cross the Alps in winter and stand barefooted outside the pope's residence for three days in token of his repentance. In the 16th century Reformation movement many churches

threw off their allegiance to the pope, but the result was only that they came instead under the control of their own governments and became "State Churches", with their bishops appointed and their finances administered by the government. This can be called the union of church and state.

Even today, the Anglican Church in England, the Presbyterian Church in Scotland and the Lutheran Church in the countries of northern Europe are all state churches. In France, Italy and the United States, church and state are formally separated, but actually the church is at the service of capitalism, and so what we see is merely a convenient division of labour between church and state in the interests of capitalism.

After Hitler's Nazism developed in Germany, it used all kinds of methods to ensure strict control of the church. First it appointed a bishop to reorganize the church, and forced the church to carry out the official policy of anti-Semitism, to expel any pastors of Jewish ancestry, to do away with the Old Testament, and even to fabricate the theory that Jesus Himself was not a Jew. Some German Christian leaders opposed this line. Then Christians in England and America took up this attitude of opposition, and made it a talking point against totalitarianism, a term under which they indiscriminately included the Soviet Union along with Germany and Italy. Since then the question of the relation of church and state has become an urgent one. The international church conference at Oxford in July 1937 took as its subject Church, Society and State.

The fascism of Germany and Italy was destroyed in the Second World War, and so then the attack of Western Christian theorists was directed against Russia and Communism. In their discussion of the relation of church and state they always took Russia and the People's Republics that have come into being since the war as the object of their attack. They said that totalitarianism began in 1917, that is to say, that it began with the October Revolution. They were not able to deny the economic achievements of the socialist nations, but they maintained that totalitarianism meant the end of human freedom, that the abolition of private property put men in slavery to their governments, because private property is an essential material condition of individual freedom. They admitted that private property created classes in society, but they maintained that arbitrary government also created a new type of class system.

They raised the following theological questions:

1. The basis of the state's governmental authority. The American theologian Niebuhr wrote a little book on the subject of whether the state's governmental authority is divine or demonic. He maintained that when a government tries to encompass all of human life, making itself into God, it is then demonic. The attitude of Western theologians toward this question is varied: Some consider the state as a part of God's creation, that it is what He has ordained and that men should obey it; others consider that government and spiritual life are two different categories, unrelated to each other, - they can exist together without conflict; still others think that government is the result of Adam's sin, that God's redemption only becomes effective through the church, and that therefore "the children of the Kingdom" have no interest in the state or government; and finally, some consider that the state is also under the rule of God, that believers should be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and

should therefore take part in politics to the utmost of their ability, to make the state conform to Christian ideals.

2. Where is the Christian's ultimate loyalty? Western theologians think that the state has been moving in the direction of "divine right" or absoluteness, and claiming jurisdiction over all aspects of material and spiritual life, and that therefore it is very difficult to avoid a conflict between church and state. In that case should the Christian's ultimate loyalty be toward God or toward the state? According to their analysis, there are the following possibilities: 1) complete obedience to the state; 2) uncompromising opposition; and 3) indifference. But there are also those who feel that the best attitude is one of objective criticism.

3. What is the proper relationship of might, right, and love? Western theologians consider that the essence of the state is might, directed toward the control of the whole people. On the other hand, they recognize that all power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. But still the individual cannot separate himself from the common life, and love therefore constrains the Christian to take part in the collective life. But in order to make the right effective in collective life, it is necessary to use force, and this use of force produces corruption in the state and right is destroyed. Thus the proper relation of love, might and right is an urgent and perplexing theological problem.

4. What is the relation between God's creative and His redemptive work? If the state is a part of God's creation, does it have any relation to man's redemption? How is the will of God manifest in the state? Is the Gospel of Christ concerned only with the reconciliation of man to God, or does it also have meaning for the state and for society? Since man cannot live apart from the state, is it not also true that his personal salvation cannot be effected in complete isolation from the reformation of society? Can Christians have a special theory of their own regarding the essence and the function of the state? Since the state has its own laws, does that mean that it has no relation to our spiritual life? Western theologians consider that these are questions that need clarification.

The Recognition by Chinese Christians of New China

Before considering the Christian attitude toward New China, let us consider the relation of church and state in Old China. Christian history in China has not been very long. It is true that Nestorianism came to China in the time of the Emperor T'ai Tsung of the Tang dynasty, 1,300 years ago, and again under the Mongols, 600 years ago, the Christian Church flourished, but it did not take root. The Roman Catholic Church has been here 376 years, from the time when Matthew Ricci began preaching in 1581, the eighth year of Emperor Wan Li, to the present. The Protestant Church has been here only 150 years, from the arrival of Robert Morrison in 1807 until now. As regards numbers, the Catholics now have three million, and the Protestants less than one million members, a very small number in contrast to the 600 million of the population.

Since the Christian Church was brought to China by mission boards and remained under mission board control, it enjoyed many special privileges as a result of colonialism, but in our national life it never became a political power on its own. The missionary enterprise was made use of by imperialism, and so in the history of the church in modern times cannot be

separated from the history of imperialism which used the church for purposes of aggression. Reactionary government allied itself to imperialism, and so in the past the Christian Church has consciously or unconsciously served the purposes of reactionary government.

After Liberation, imperialism was driven out by the People's Government, the missionaries one after another returned home, and the Chinese Church broke off all relations with imperialism, and has gradually become, in fact, self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating. After seven or eight years of actual experience, Chinese Christians have come to recognize that the People's Government under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party is sincere in its policy of freedom of religious belief, and is helping the church to solve various practical difficulties. We not only have complete freedom in both individual and public worship, but are also left free both in evangelism and internal administration. Since both the standard of living and the level of public morals have been rising everywhere, we feel that there are improved conditions for proclaiming the Gospel in the New China, and that therefore to participate in the Government is to bear true witness for the Lord.

We passionately love our country, we passionately love the People's Government, and we passionately love socialism, because we believe that this kind of state and this kind of government is wholly according to the will of God. As far as we are concerned, there is complete separation of church and state, but without any mutual conflict. The Communists are atheistic, but they respect us who have faith, and the government which they lead will protect religion as long as religion continues to exist. Although we and the Communists differ in faith, we are all Chinese, and are one in our desire for the increasing prosperity, strength, and glory of our country. This difference in belief is therefore no hindrance to intimate cooperation in the building up of our country.

Some people in the West on hearing that we love our country are disturbed, fearing that we are becoming narrow nationalists or Chauvinists, and particularly that in loving our country we will cease to love God. This fear is groundless. There are two reasons why we are so patriotic. First, in the past the church was under colonial rule and cut off from the people, who looked upon Christianity as a foreign religion and upon Christians as slaves to a foreign power. Now, from the inception of the Three-Self-Movement in the estimation of the majority of the people the church has become something completely new. Secondly, our country under the leadership of the Communist Party is something deserving of love. And so our patriotism is a spontaneous emotion and not a forced manifestation.

Some Western Christians on hearing that we unreservedly support the People's Government have concluded that the Chinese Church has lost its independence. They say that the fact that we cannot oppose the government is a proof that we do not have real freedom. But we recognize that the People's Government is a constitutional government established by the people; its entire policy is based on the interest of the people as a whole and is for the service of the people. Our democracy is a broad consultative democracy, and not the mechanical right of the majority to oppress the minority. In our country, Christians like all other citizens have the right to direct or criticize the government. We do not oppose the People's Government because a government which serves the people ought not to be opposed.

Must the church in all the countries of Asia remain for ever under the control of colonialism? In fact the so-called criticism of Communism by Western Christians arises from their misunderstanding of Communism. Influenced by the statements of their capitalists, they make use of a contemptuous and perverted view of Communism as an excuse for upholding capitalist government and colonial rule. In America today the use of such terms as the "new capitalism" or "people's capitalism" is only the putting on of a new face in order to confuse the working people in their fight against exploitation and oppression.

The Biblical View

The Bible is not very explicit on the question of the relation of church and state, but still it is possible from the teaching of Christ and the apostles to infer what should be the basic attitude of the church toward the state. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and never attempted to seize temporal power. In John 18:36 we read that Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world". In John 6:15 it is recorded that when Jesus knew that the people were about to make him king, he withdrew into the mountains. Jesus' chief work was to save the souls of men, He was concerned with the reconciliation of man to God, because He recognized this as the most fundamental question of human life. Still He loved His own country, and once wept over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37).

In that day the Jewish people hated Roman rule, and Jesus understood that thoroughly. But He also knew that under the iron heel of Rome any open resistance would have met with a very cruel reception. And so when the Pharisees asked Him if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, He answered, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's". (Mt 22:21). This, of course, was a clever answer which saved Him from harm, but it was more than that. It contains a deep truth. Apart from recognizing the authority of Caesar, He clearly points out two things: (1) Caesar is not everything, and (2) Caesar is not God.

The apostle Paul also passionately loved his country, and could write, "Did God cast off His people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin". (Ro. 11:1). Again he wrote, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh". (Ro. 9:3). But Paul was also a Roman citizen, and so was often protected from Jewish persecution by the Roman government. (Acts 12:31-34; 23:12-24). A general persecution of Christians by Rome did not take place until five years after the Epistle to the Romans was written, in 64 A.D. And so Paul recommended obedience to the government, saying, "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God". (Ro. 13:1).

But Jesus and Paul both recognized that civil government is an instrument in the hands of God, and is for the service of the people. Jesus said, "The kings of the Gentiles have lordship over them; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve". (Luke 22:25,26). Paul recognized that the ruler is "a minister of God to thee for good". (Ro. 13:4).

But we cannot say that all civil rule in history has done the will of God and served the people. Even in the primitive church there was sometimes obedience and sometimes opposition to the government. Paul in Ro. 13:1-7 indicates that we should obey the government, and Peter said, "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evildoers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." (1 Peter 2:13-17). And in Titus 3:1 we read, "Put them in mind to be in subjection to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready unto every good work".

But when Peter was persecuted by the high priest, he replied without hesitation, "We must obey God rather than men". (Acts 5:29). And especially when the Roman Empire instituted a general persecution against Christians, the book of Revelation shows forth a decided spirit of opposition, describing Rome as "the great harlot drunk with the blood of the saints and the witnesses of Jesus". (Rev. 17:1-6). It likens Rome to a beast warring with the saints, and implies that this beast is the emperor Nero. (Rev. 13).

It is apparent that the attitude of the church towards the state depends upon the nature of the government concerned. And whether a government is good or bad depends on the men who control it. The government basically is only an instrument of rule, we cannot decide in the abstract whether a government is to be obeyed or resisted, but must see whether that government really serves the people. We must obey a government that serves the people and resist one that does not. And in each case what we do is equally a witness for the Lord.

According to our experience, New China really does serve the people, it stands opposed to imperialism and reaction, and protects and helps the church which has now cut off all relations with imperialism. In the view of Western Christians a government to be worthy of support by Christians must have the following characteristics: 1. It must guarantee freedom of religious belief. 2. It must be strong enough to maintain a peaceful social order. 3. It must foster the right and put down wrong. 4. It must work for the greatest good of the greatest number. New China has all of these characteristics.

The Oxford Conference of 1937 defined religious freedom as follows: 1. The church must be free to establish its own creed. 2. It must be free to carry on public and private worship, to evangelize and to preach. 3. It must be free to reject any religious rites or cults enforced by the government. 4. It must be free to determine its own form of government, and the qualifications of its own ministers and members. Similarly members must be free to join the church of their own choice. 5. The church must be free to train its own ministers and provide religious education for the young and for their spiritual development. 6. It must be free to carry on a programme of Christian service and to preach the gospel both at home and abroad. 7. It must be free to cooperate with other churches. 8. It must be free to use all means granted to other voluntary organizations, such as the right to hold property or receive offerings.

According to our experience the Church in New China has not been interfered with in any of these ways. Western Christians are always raising the point that the church believes in God and Communists do not, and the latter will therefore not allow the Christian Church to continue to exist. But the formal logic of this objection has already been refuted by our experience.

Our support of the People's Government of New China and our enthusiastic participation in the construction of socialism are a good witness for the Lord, and not "appeasement" or a blind following. We are faithful to the God revealed by Christ, and do not feel any inconsistency between this and our love for our country. Our church has now established its own independence, and is therefore in a position to enter into fuller relations with the churches in other countries. We believe that there is a bright future for the church in New China, because we are convinced that that future is in the hands of Almighty God.

(Translated by F. P. Jones)

III

THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH IN EUROPE

One of the puzzles in the life of the European churches is that they have, despite all the significant movements for economic and social cooperation in Europe since the war, remained so much confined to their traditional national framework of operation. At a time when the churches in Asia have moved rapidly to set up an East Asian Conference of Churches and when churches in Africa are already beginning to think seriously about regional cooperation, the European churches have shown very great reluctance to move in this direction.

At the moment various new initiatives are being taken to bring the churches of Europe closer together, but the process is extremely slow and tortuous compare with the cooperative action demonstrated by the churches in other regions of the world.

The simplest explanation of this situation is that the European churches are still very greatly under the domination of nationalism. And it is probably true that the churches in Asia and Africa do not have this handicap to overcome to the same extent. For this reason we might expect that the effort to achieve regional cooperation in Europe would proceed more slowly as these churches seek with difficulty to discover a new and acceptable basis for determining their relationship to each other.

In fact, Christians in Europe have done relatively little thinking about their situation in relation to European social and political developments, and such efforts as have been made in this direction have been frustrated by failure to agree on either the principle or the method by which closer relationships could be achieved. It is possible that the existence of the World Council secretariat in Europe has lead the European churches to assume that their European ecumenical responsibilities were being satisfactorily fulfilled. However, as the World Council gives its attention increasingly to the problems of its member churches in other parts of the world, and as the churches in Asia and Africa begin to play a larger role in the ecumenical movement, the churches of Europe may discover that a new common action on their part is required. At the moment, however, there is little evidence of a serious determination to work toward this goal.

The Arguments against European Church Cooperation

Those in the churches who really favour closer cooperation in Europe are probably greatly outnumbered by those who see no nead for it or who are in opposition to it. In France, Germany and Holland, where European economic integration has begun, there is probably greater interest in cooperation between churches than in Great Britain, Scandinavia, and Switzerland, where the issues does not yet have this substantial economic and social basis. But even within the former churches there is great division of opinion about the desirability of an organized confederation or conference of European churches.

The opposition to closer cooperation is based on both theological and practical considerations. By their nature the efforts to bring about cooperation of churches in Europe are in the first instance based, as are similar movements in Asia and Africa, largely on non-theological considerations. The regional grouping of churches appears to follow more closely the lines set by geography, political, or ethnic outlook, than theological principle. The apparent non-theological motivation of a regional grouping of churches in Europe may partly explain the hesitation and even suspicion with which such a preposal is greeted. How can the regional confederation of the churches be justified if there is no substantial "theological" reason for it? May not such pragmatic "regionalism" lead to a false solution of the problem of nationalism in Europe, so that Christians in the West become not less, but more divided than before from their Christian brethren in other parts of the world? Such questions have not been answered to the satisfaction of many Christians in Europe today.

Theoretically this might become an important objection to European cooperation, and certainly there is need to examine carefully the ecumenical and theological significance of movements for regional cooperation. Actually, however, the regional cooperation of churches in Europe may be viewed as a more local expression of ecumenical responsibility, and looked at in this way it raises theological problems very little different from those raised by the existence of the World Council itself. Furthermore Christians in Europe have already begun to work more closely together from practical necessity. The development of such associations as the European Ecumenical Youth Committee, the European Association of Evangelical Academies, the European Leaders of Laymen's Work and the Consultation of General Secretaries of the Student Christian Movement are some examples of the need for administrative collaboration by the churches in Europe within the larger ecumenical framework.

But opposition to a large measure of church cooperation in Europe also comes from those Western European Christians who fear its consequences for relations with the churches in Eastern Europe. They argue that these churches will not be able to participate freely in such a European fraternity, that it will therefore become a cooperation solely of Western European churches with the effect of increasing the division of the churches between Europe East and West. As long as the Christians in the East cannot join organizationally in such European cooperation or can only do so with the consent of their governments too much, Western Church cooperation would be a step in the wrong direction. Due to the "cold war" situation which has prevailed in Europe since the war, this argument has had the result of forestalling any steps in favour of European Church cooperation.

This line of reasoning leads to the fear that, in the present political situation in Europe, closer cooperation of the churches would be dangerous since it would inevitably tend to conform to political divisions in Europe. The organization of a Western European Christian community could, it is believed, easily become or be construed as a support for the West. This would undermine the spiritual neutrality or the transcendence of the Church in the East-West conflict which is its most important witness in this situation of political and ideological tension.

The question therefore remains: can the churches of Europe come together in a way which will avoid accentuating divisions and adding to suspicions? In

view of the complications and difficulties, is it right for Christian leaders and laymen in Europe to make further efforts in this direction? These questions are real. They cannot, however, be answered fully without some effort to analyze the reasons for seeking a greater measure of cooperation among these churches. There is no doubt that the Christian churches have a common responsibility in Europe today. European society and culture are in a large measure the product of Christian thought and concern. It is impossible for the Church to be passive and indifferent at a time when this European society is undergoing a serious crisis. The European churches must make an effort to understand the spiritual and moral dimensions of that situation and speak and act in a creative way in it.

There are at least three levels or areas of common Christian responsibility in the present European situation involving:

a) the attitude of Christians in the European East-West tension;
b) the movement for European social and economic reconstruction;
c) the new relations between Europe and the peoples of Asia and Africa.

While it is still a question whether and how far these three levels of cooperation can be reconciled with each other, it may be useful to indicate why they all need to become areas of Christian concern.

Ecumenical Contacts between the Churches in Europe East and West

Paradoxically the East-West conflict makes it essential that the churches in the two parts of divided Europe have as much contact as possible with each other. This is undoubtedly the most important and also the most difficult level on which to seek for church cooperation in Europe. Such contacts can help greatly to strengthen the life and work of all these churches. The division of Christians in Europe East and West cannot be accepted by these churches.

However, the difficulties in maintaining contact are great. The members of the churches in Eastern Europe have only limited opportunities for sharing in East-West Christian meetings. And very often Western European church leaders too have been suspected by their governments for trying to maintain contact with the churches of Eastern Europe.

A further difficulty is that the opportunities for contacts between churches in Eastern and Western Europe tend to increase or diminish according to the political situation; the situation also varies from country to country in East Europe. Today there is tension between the churches of Western Europe and the governments particularly of Hungary and Eastern Germany which are once more putting considerable pressure on the churches in their own countries. On the other hand there are possibilities, for the moment at least, of new contacts with the churches in Poland and Czechoslovakia. And the meeting of the leaders of the World Council with the Moscow Patriarchate, being held this month, promises to provide new contact with the churches in Russia. In this situation is it possible and desirable to think toward a European conference of churches in which churches in both West and East Europe would participate?

During recent years slight efforts in this direction have been made without real success. There was a meeting of some church leaders from East and West in Liselund, Denmark, in May 1957, and a meeting of leaders of West European churches in Berlin in January, 1958. These meetings did not clear up the differences between

various approaches. However, following a meeting of some of these church leaders in Warsaw, in June 1958, it is now proposed that there be a meeting of all European church representatives early in 1959. It is significant that the committee which, with the help of the World Council, will prepare for this meeting includes prominent church leaders from both Eastern and Western Europe.

Such a meeting of European churches could help greatly to create understanding between Christians in Europe and could provide an opportunity for discussion in a significant ecumenical perspective of some problems of Christian witness in Europe (e.g. evangelism, problems of minority churches, religious liberty, etc.). There are obvious limits to the kind of problems that can be considered in such gatherings. It is doubtful whether there can yet be a frank discussion and critique of the Christian responsibility in relation to government policy. Cooperation at this level must therefore confine itself to the consideration of those questions which can be discussed without prejudicing the participation of any church.

Responsibility of the Churches in the Economic and Social Reconstruction of Western Europe.

The political stalemate between Russia and the West has not prevented Western Europe from acting to rebuild its economic and social foundations. In fact just the contrary. Western Europe has since the war been under great pressure to revise its economic and political system. The devastation of the war made this necessary. Also the war revealed the decline which had set in in Europe, the stagnation of her economy and the need for new experiments in economic cooperation. The present "cold war" has intensified the efforts of Europe to create a more viable and progressive society.

Therefore one of the important challenges confronting particularly the churches of Western Europe is that of thinking together about their role in a Western European society which has been transformed as radically in the years since the war. The Common Market and Euratom are only the most recent steps in this transformation. Slowly and painfully the countries of Western Europe have been seeking to widen the sphere of their cooperation in cultural economic, and political questions. What has been the reaction of the churches in these countries?

As yet they have made very little effort to come to grips with these changes in European life; on the contrary they have tended to ignore them. This may be explained partly by their caution due to the uncertainty about the outcome of Western European integration. Nevertheless it is clear that European economic developments have proceeded faster than the churches seem to realise.

This lack of official concern by the European churches increases the importance of various unofficial attempts to interpret Christian responsibility in relation to what is taking place. Since 1950 a group of laymen, representing the different countries of Europe, have been meeting regularly twice a year to discuss the Christian responsibility in the present situation of Europe. This group, which is called the Committee on the Christian Reaponsibility for European Cooperation, is composed of laymen active in political and economic affairs and includes leading socialists like Dr. C.L. Patijn of Holland, Prof. André Philip of France, and Mr. John Edwards of Great Britain, and liberal and conservative leaders like Prof. René Courtin of France, Dr. Walter Bauer, a

leading industrialist of Germany, and M. Jean Rey, until recently minister of economic affairs of Belgium and at present Belgian representative in the new European Economic Community. Prof. Roger Mehl of France and Dr. H.H. Walz of Germany are two European theologians who have participated in the work of the Committee.

In its statements this group has expressed its conviction that the future health and progress of Europe depend on the search for new forms of political and economic life, and they have supported the efforts for European economic and social integration. They have charged the churches with failing to give guidance to their members in relation to the moral and spiritual challenge created by the developments in the European situation. They have urged the churches to provide an opportunity for a "real meeting of minds between theologians, Church leaders and laymen from political life" in order to overcome the uncertainty and confusion which paralyzes action by the churches in European society today. They deplore the fact that "at the present time there is little evidence of such Christian understanding." In their view, "specific efforts to develop a clear and relevant Christian witness on these issues must be organized by the European churches."

Here is an area where common action by the European churches is urgently needed. They can continue to remain silent only at their peril.

The Responsibilities of Europe in Relation to Asia and Africa.

At the present time the countries of Europe are also required to develop new relations with the countries of Asia and Africa. The old relationships are under great criticism and the development of new patterns is not easy. The European churches and missions are inevitably involved in the search for these new patterns.

To an increasing extent this is a common European responsibility and not just a concern of individual countries. It is evident that European responsibilities for aiding in the economic and social development of areas of Asia and Africa can only be fulfilled by cooperation between the countries of Europe. Thus the European Common Market treaty provides for a Western European approach to the problems of economic development in French West Africa and the Belgian Congo. Moreover the situations of tension(e.g. the conflict in Algeria) between countries in Asia or Africa and individual European countries are now of concern to the whole of Europe.

The churches and missionary movements in Europe can do much to help in the formulation of new relations with these countries. Here is a new area where the solidarity of the churches at a regional level is of growing importance. As yet they have hardly begun to explore these questions together.

The Spiritual Resources of European Churches for Common Action.

Do the European churches have the spiritual resources to meet the challenge of collective action at these three levels? Everyone is aware of their great theological and ethical accomplishments in the period since the war. The Evangelical Academies, the Kirchentag, and the new lay movements which have appeared in the church life in many countries are powerful evidence of the vitality of the European churches. Yet it remains to be seen whether in regard to their common responsibilities in Europe these churches can really find each other and can meet the challenge with which Europe confronts them.

IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CHRISTIAN ECONOMICS GROUP AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PARISH CREDIT UNION

(This is the first of a series of reports on imaginative action projects to be published in Background Information. This report is from the Administrative Board of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, a new effort of Christian witness and service which began in 1948 in the Puerto Rican and Negro quarter of New York City.)

The development of a Christian Economics group and out of it the growth of a Parish Credit Union is one example of the way in which the East Harlem Protestant Parish is now evangelizing men and women in East Harlem and helping them to perform their own ministry to their own community.

An inner city (1) church is a "mission" only in the sense that every true church is a mission to those who do not know Christ. Also, because the churches in the East Harlem Protestant Parish are faced with problems quite different from those in most parts of the United States, they respond differently.

But the Christian ministry remains the same: this has been the belief of the Group Ministry ever since the East Harlem Protestant Church was founded. It is true that in the early days the Group Ministry was, in effect, the church in its particular section of East Harlem. And because we were appalled at the misery around us, we spent hours daily helping the alcoholic, the demented, the delinquent, the addicts and the homeless.

Yet our purpose was always to establish Christ's church where it had not been before, among healthy adult men and women. And until all the members of such a church, not just the paid staff, are responding to human need, no church is being true to its own mission.

As the staff became embedded in the East Harlem community, we began to make friends among people in no way attracted to a church whose ministry appeared to them to be to children, old ladies and to youth -- and to the hopelessly broken in mind and spirit. These working men and women of East Harlem were as disinclined to identify themselves with what seemed to be an old-fashioned "mission" type of church as would their counterparts in other sections of American society. Watching the early activity of the staff with a half-cynical detachment, they came to give it a grudging respect. But these good works they observed did not speak the gospel directly to them.

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1) "Inner city" means here an urban area in the heart of the city which has undergone changes in its sociological and ethnic makeup and in the process become a depressed area. Churches in such areas have the dual problem of ministering to those of their parishioners who, although they have moved away, retain their church membership; and to an influx of newcomers whose ways and needs are quite different.

Yet without knowing it, they too wanted God and they wanted to help their fellowmen. The Christian gospel is based on love, an abstract word not easily understood. It is only when love is translated into action that it begins to be meaningful. In East Harlem there is far more love than is generally publicized. The ties of loyalty within families, the enduring friendships bridging decades of petty feuding between neighbors, the strong attachments among the youth who grow up together on our blocks are all forms of love. The first reaction of new workers in the Parish to the spontaneous friendship people show them is that "the people here are starved for love." Spontaneous display of feeling is one of the realities in East Harlem.

However, the tragedy of living in the inner city is that society deprives so many people of the chance to help their friends face and solve life's most painful practical problems. Because an adult in East Harlem has very little aside from clothes and furniture which he actually feels is his own, his opportunities for imaginative unselfish giving are severely limited. His very home is no more than four rooms rented month by month, from which he may be summarily ejected after 20 years of tenancy.

One of the great justifications of private property is that when properly understood, it gives its owner a sense of responsibility to himself, his family, his community, his country and to God. But the people of the great American metropolises have no private property to speak of and they are only too aware of their resulting insecurity. A whole neighborhood can be wiped out by a new housing project coming in, ending friendships three generations old. One illness can obliterate a modest bank account. Those who have come to the city from another environment, a farmhouse or tight-knit village community, carry with them memories of security. But their sons and daughters have no such memories. Reared on the city streets, they learn only suspicion, mistrust and insecurity. Every adolescent in East Harlem dreams of some day owning a home of his own. But statistics and reality prove this dream utterly unattainable for the vast majority. This unrealizable dream adds to the unspoken cynicism of many an outwardly happy individual in East Harlem.

We believed, nonetheless, that it was possible to translate love into responsible practical concern for others, even in a society where there was no economic security. The earliest Christians were city-dwellers who lived in the ancient metropolises of the Mediterranean. One of the very first ways in which these converts to Christ showed their love for each other and their neighbors was throug measures to see that everyone had enough to eat. Because they took seriously the commandment, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," they found ways of helping people with their physical needs. While there are more differences than similarities between the ancient city and the modern, the poor of both have the same problem of insecurity. Such insecurity breeds nothing but bitterness, mistrust, despair and downright hate unless God's love breaks through. Today as then the Christian wants to make love real by helping people to find security in its practical application.

So, believing that every possible method of demonstrating the love of Christ should be tried as a form of evangelism, some of the staff in the summer of 1955 began an experiment. They wanted to confront a small group of men and women with one of the underlying causes of the general malaise of East Harlem: economic insecurity. The staff therefore singled out eight men and women in their twenties and asked them to pledge themselves to get together once a week for frank

discussions of the problems which bothered them the most. From the beginning it was made clear that the leaders had two ulterior motives. They wanted to confront the original eight, and any who joined them, with God and Jesus Christ. They also hoped by the fall of 1955 to have a group of people seriously discussing the basic economic problems of East Harlem and its citizens with a view to some form of action.

In July, 1955, this group started meeting in one of the staff apartments. They called themselves the Christian Economics Group. The original eight formed the nucleus, but the door was open to everyone. Forty-five different individuals drifted in and out of the meetings during the first year. Of these, sixteen became regular. Within a matter of weeks a pattern evolved. The first hour was devoted to a frank, almost, brutal, discussion of every conceivable problem the group had on their minds: race prejudice, attitudes toward parents, sex, rearing of children, dreams, psychology, ways of earning and spending money, ideas about religion. The second hour was devoted to a discussion of money and problems related to it. Gaining hope and enthusiasm, the staff leader soon introduced the idea of a credit union. By September, the entire group accepted the credit union as the goal toward which they were all working. After the discussion of money and economics came the third part of the meeting: refreshments, informal talk, and the natural development of a social life within the group.

These three elements -- frank honest discussion of heart-felt problems; an hour of conscious self-education in Christian Economics, and specifically in credit unions; and a free time for informal banter and friendship -- became essential to attaining the underlying purposes of the group. People who had not known each other before made friends. Free talk broke down unspoken prejudices and unseen barriers. Self-education and conscious preparation for leadership in an undertaking to help other people built mutual respect and the realistic hope that together we could face the problems of city living. All of this, followed by informal socializing, developed a solid friendship among the members of the group. It was from this friendship that all else grew.

The discussions of the group about money made it apparent that many people in East Harlem have modest bank accounts but that the problem of credit is still an acute one for almost every family. A young couple moving from one room in their in-laws' apartment to a new four-room home of their own in a housing project suddenly had to have several hundred dollars for furniture. To buy on the installment plan was the only solution. This almost invariably meant buying cheap furniture at high prices. Almost before the marriage had properly begun the couple was crushed with debts. For others, a minor illness or operation would wipe out a couple of hundred dollars carefully saved over the years. Christmas, vacations, the need for graduation clothes for older children, unexpected family tragedies like death or severe illness upset the family budget and, worse, confirmed people in the knowledge of their own rootlessness and insecurity. People had turned to loan sharks, to various high-interest loan companies, and had often jeopardized family relationships by borrowing from relatives. The need for small loans for self-improvement and to feet temporary crises was acute. No bank, no loan company, no installment buying offered any realistic solution. The credit union did.

II

A credit union is a kind of banking club. Members of an established organization such as a lodge, a factory, or a church band together and pool at least part of their savings. From the money so accumulated, loans are granted at a modest rate of interest to members who are in need or who are making improvements of some worthwhile kind. The credit union idea first came to this country at the turn of the century. Today the national government through the Bureau of Federal Credit Unions exerts careful control over their establishment and operations. The organization, the books, and the procedures have been established for years so that any group of intelligent, dedicated laymen can start and run a credit union without previous training.

From the beginning the New York State Credit Union League, through its representative, Mr. Sidney Blitz, gave consistent help and instruction to the Christian Economics Group. In late 1955 the group first applied for a federal charter in order to set up a Parish credit union. Our first application was refused. Because the East Harlem Protestant Parish was comprised of four churches, the federal people did not believe that we were sufficiently united to insure a successful credit union. For one year, the Christian Economics Group gave time each week to instructing itself in the nature and running of credit unions, and plugged away at proving to the Bureau of Federal Credit Unions that we were in fact united. Mr. Blitz was our strategist. At his suggestion we circulated petitions among the Parish members and got over 100 signatures of people who pledged themselves to join. We surveyed the entire Parish and compiled lists of statistics proving all the different types of activities shared by Parish members irrespective of local church affiliation. By October of 1956 we were ready to apply again, with an imposing pile of papers to document our unity.

As Mr. Blitz may well have known, this year of discussion and work together united the group and made of it a team. We got our charter and took in our first members in November, 1956.

Today, the East Harlem Protestant Parish Federal Credit Union has 101 members and $1854.64 in savings. Forty-five loans have been made to members. A total of $2577.79 has been lent out. Nine laymen and two staff members make up the three committees which run the Credit Union: the Board of Directors, the Credit Committee (which passes on loan applications) and the Supervisory Committee. The actual leadership rests with the laymen. The two staff members have relatively unimportant roles. Mr. Blitz has remarked that much of the success of the Credit Union during its first year is due to the dedicated careful work of the treasurer, Mr. Raymond T. Rodriguez, who keeps office hours three nights a week in the Parish office and who spends hours more each month keeping the books.

The effects of the Credit Union on the life of the Parish cannot be measured statistically, however. The original purposes of the Christian Economics Group were threefold and interlocking: 1.) It aimed to develop more lay leadership within the Parish which would be dedicated to carrying on Christ's mission of evangelism and service to others. 2.) It wanted to apply the love inherent in the Christian gospel to solving one specific economic problem of our community, with an eye to far greater undertakings in the future. 3.) It wanted to make the Christian gospel relevant to the lives of the mature stable element in East Harlem and thus win them to the Christian faith. Now that the Christian Economics Group is two and a half years old and the Credit Union has celebrated its first anniversary, some evaluation is in order.

III

As a result of the work of the Christian Economics Group, several people involved in it from the beginning have joined the church. Several more have taken on leadership and responsibility who had never shown the slightest inclination to work in an organized way to face East Harlem's problems. And a substantial group of old Parish members, already active in their local churches, have worked for the Credit Union as a means of showing their honest concern for the money problems of their friends and neighbors. All who have become a part of Christian Economics have felt a new spirit in their own lives. Some know it to be the power of Jesus Christ. Some simply feel that they want to help people and have not yet seen the connection between this emotion and God. There is a definite sense in which each has left something of his old self behind, has taken on new responsibility, and has dedicated himself to helping others.

A widow with three children to support took out a loan from the Credit Union some months ago. Sickness prevented her from working and from repaying her debt. When a member of the Bpard of Directors called on her, he did not go as a loan-collector but as a friend. When he discovered that she had other debts as well, on which she was paying more interest, he showed her how she could take out one new larger loan from the Credit Union, pay off all her debts with the money, and repay the one loan more slowly at a lower rate of interest. At first she was stunned into silence. For years no one had cared whether or not she made both ends meet. Now she saw hope. She took the chance offered.

Day by day the Credit Union and its leaders are helping people to solve their own economic problems. It is their conviction that this is in keeping with the teachings of Jesus who did not use the word "love" in the Lord's Prayer, but did show an interest in people's getting enough to eat. Upon the growing confidence of the Parish members and the emerging leadership in economic affairs, many people are hoping to build more fundamental structures into the life of the East Harlem Protestant Parish. There is talk now of a cooperative apartment house, in the face of the probable destruction of the remaining tenements in the Parish area. With the new tool of economic cooperation there is hope that modern Christians will be able to tackle problems of health, housing, education, and recreation by themselves here in the city.

"Through friendship comes faith," wrote one of our youth members in describing what the East Harlem Protestant Parish meant to him. People in the city know what friendship and love are. Through honest strong human affection men and women can be led to understand the Christian gospel when words, testimonies, arguments, preaching all fail. Out of the Christian Economics group and the common satisfaction of developing the Credit Union has grown a warmth of friendship which has given faith to skeptics and restored hope to the cynical. It has proved an honest simple way to demonstrate God's practical love for men.

Today it is upon the growing faith and understanding of these men and women that the four Parish churches are building. The developing lay leadership in the Christian Education program, in youth work, in the narcotics program, in the Parish Council committees comes increasingly from such men and women. They have become part of the church in our section of East Harlem, with their own ministry of preaching, evangelism, and service to the community. Through their concern, their work, their wisdom about the community, the needs of the broken people of East Harlem are being met more effectively than in the early days when the Group Ministry worked alone. Although the staff continues to work with an enormous number

of individual cases, the concern for people and their problems is now the concern of the whole Parish.

New times, new problems demand new methods of proclaiming the gospel. The work of the Christian Economics group is not finished, but it has already shown that its approach to people and their problems is one more valid way of testifying to our faith.